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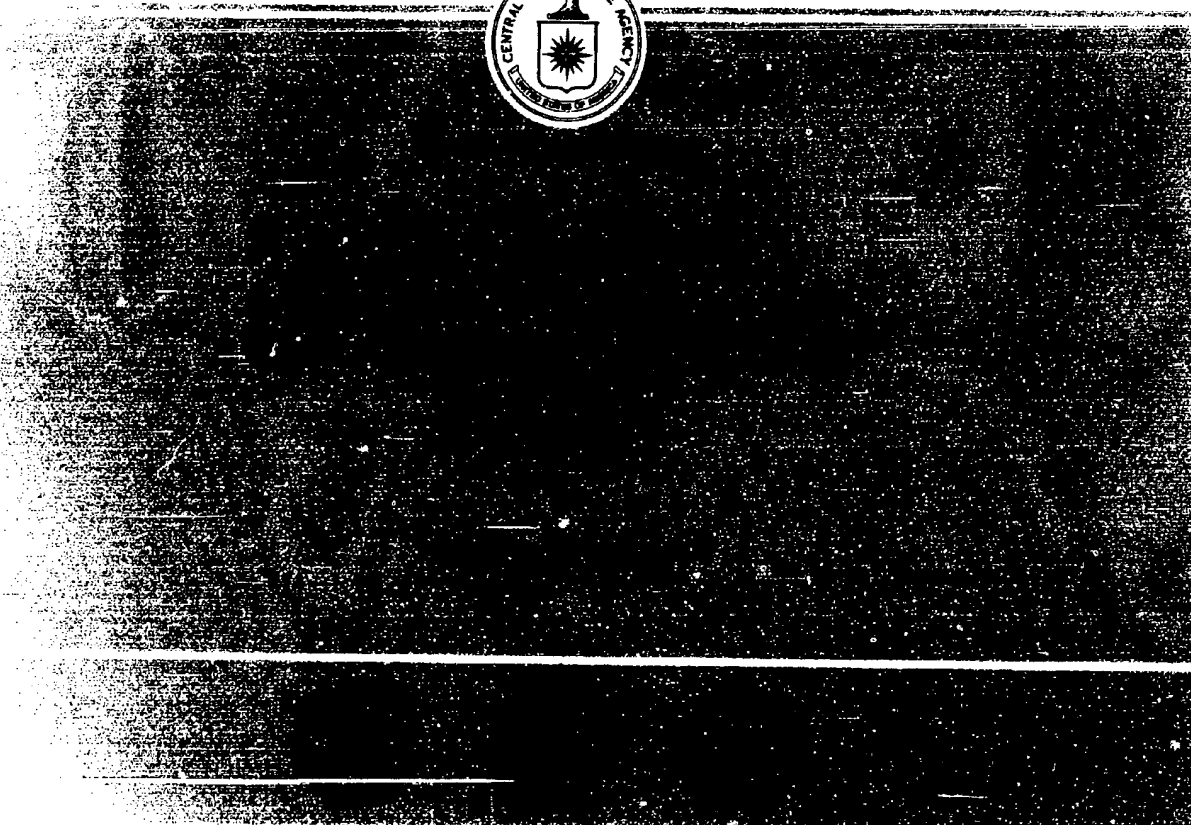
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Special Analysis

CHINA:

Prospects for Joining Test Ban Treaty

Although China probably is reluctant to sign a comprehensive test ban treaty and probably will oppose any treaty proposal that would permit low-yield experiments, it appears to be preparing for the option of joining the treaty in 1996. Meanwhile, it will conduct a rigorous testing program to complete planned nuclear weapons development. []

Beijing probably views testing moratoriums by the other nuclear states as temporary and would not be likely to curtail its own infrequent testing activities. Although China may be reluctant to sign a test ban treaty, some Chinese officials have indicated that it may be willing to do so if the other four nuclear powers complete such an agreement. [] a test ban option is being considered and that China may already be planning for a halt in nuclear testing in 1996. []

A test ban that takes effect during this decade would significantly inhibit China's development of new warhead designs, which its nuclear test program has historically focused on. It would also prevent the incorporation of safety upgrades, such as insensitive high explosives, into the stockpile. Work on such upgrades, advanced primary and secondary technology, and development of subkiloton nuclear devices would be relegated to computer simulations and nonnuclear testing. Because China's nuclear testing experience is limited and its computing capabilities are modest, it probably would not be able to introduce any of these technologies into its stockpile under a test ban. []

Stockpile Confidence Under a Test Ban

The mechanical and material problems that inevitably will accompany the aging of China's nuclear warheads would reduce Beijing's confidence in its stockpile under a test ban. Its reliance on only a few nuclear weapons designs means a problem could affect a large part of its stockpile. The simple nature of its warhead designs might be an asset because minor stockpile problems probably could be resolved without nuclear testing. Beijing probably could not solve a major problem without testing, however, and thus would be at a disadvantage, as compared with the other nuclear states. []

Maintaining confidence in a nuclear stockpile under a test ban depends on keeping experienced designers, engineers, and technicians. If such personnel are allowed to pursue work in other fields or if their expertise declines because of a lack of testing, confidence in being able to find and remedy problems in the stockpile would diminish. []

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~~Top Secret~~**Experiments Permitted Under a Test Ban**

China probably would be against any proposal for low-yield (kiloton or less) experiments permitted under a test ban. It has conducted only one such test and probably would believe that any permitted experiments under a test ban would perpetuate the superiority of the other nuclear weapons states. [redacted] [redacted]

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